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Books received


Book reviews

General Pathology
The latest edition of this well known and long established comprehensive textbook of general pathology maintains the high standards of the previous editions. The text is concise, scholarly and easy to read. The contents have been adapted to cover virology and immunology and also to incorporate recent advances in the more traditional topics of morbid anatomy, biochemical and physiological pathology, haematology and bacteriology. The postgraduate wishing to specialize will find this book invaluable as a general background to all areas of pathology, while the wealth of clearly presented information will give the undergraduate a firm basis for his first medical degree. References at the end of each chapter form a useful guide for further reading. Some specialists may regard the treatment of particular subjects rather scanty, only forty-two pages being devoted to haematology and even fewer to chemical pathology. The overall emphasis on tissue pathology is further demonstrated by the illustrations, the majority of which show gross pathological specimens or histological sections rather than diagrams or illustrations of biochemical or haematological abnormalities. Leukaemia, for instance, is illustrated with histological sections of the liver in the chronic leukaemias not with pictures of the blood or bone marrow appearances. These are small criticisms, however, and there is no doubt that this book is excellent value for money and will remain popular.

Aids to Postgraduate Medicine
Your reviewer believes that the major benefit the MRCP examination confers on suffering humanity is that the correct preparation for the former aids in the delivery of health care to the latter. This book, written by a senior lecturer in dermatology, purports to help those battling with examiners but could, I believe, prove of little use to them and could be positively harmful to the practice of sound clinical medicine. An adequate factual knowledge is important, but this must be firmly based on correct balance and perspective. A book that lists the causes of ‘this’, and the manifestations of ‘that’, can only help if examiners persist in asking candidates to name the causes of frontal bossing. The imbalance is typified by SBE which appears under the causes of the nephrotic syndrome (for which it is hardly ever responsible) and not amongst the causes of renal failure (which is an important manifestation of the disease and a preventable cause of end-stage renal failure).

Principles of Chemical Pathology
The title of this otherwise excellent book is misleading. Principles—common and general ideas underlying a diversity of practical procedures—are not discussed in any depth. What the authors offer is a readable, sane, concise, comprehensive and astonishingly up-to-date handbook of clinical chemical practice with neither more nor less basic chemical pathology, biochemistry and clinical medicine than is needed to make sense of the subject. This is a remarkable achievement. Chemical pathologists as a breed suffer from a lack of corrective feedback about the value and limitations of their tests at the bedside; and, more even than their clinician colleagues, they depend for up-to-date information on the printed word. As far as any one reviewer can judge, the present authors have overcome these difficulties more successfully than most. On bread-and-butter topics they write with the authority of wide practical experience, and their unadorned style admirably conveys their commonsense views. On specialized subjects they have chosen their sources carefully and critically. Inevitably they are at their best—and their best is very good indeed—when discussing the laboratory aspects of their specialty: the chapters on automation,